

Wake County Natural Areas Inventory

MITCHELLS MILL STATE NATURAL AREA

Site Number: 5

Size: about 140 acres

Site Significance: National

Quadrangle: Rolesville

Ownership: N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation, private

SIGNIFICANT FEATURES: This natural area contains classic examples of granitic flatrocks. Essentially all of the flora represented here are typical of Granitic Flatrock communities in the Piedmont. Several rare plant species are found at this site: Small's portulaca (*Portulaca smallii*) and Piedmont quillwort (*Isoetes piedmontana*), State Threatened species; and Oersted's campylopus (*Campylopus oerstedianus*) and granite flatsedge (*Cyperus granitophilus*), Significantly Rare species. Nestronia (*Nestronia umbellula*) and flatrock pimpernel (*Lindernia monticola*) are Watch List plants present at this site. The Neuse River waterdog (*Necturus lewisi*), an amphibian of Special Concern, is present in the Little River within the natural area boundaries.

LANDSCAPE RELATIONSHIPS: Immediately to the west of the natural area is the Pulleytown Road Granitic Flatrocks and Beaver Pond site, and the Barham Granitic Flatrocks site is contiguous to the north. The NC NHP combines all three of these sites into a single Mitchells Mill State Natural Area site, of National significance. The Little River Aquatic Habitat bisects the natural area.

SITE DESCRIPTION: This State Natural Area lies about 4 miles southeast of Rolesville, wedged between NC 96 and Pulleytown Road (SR 2300). Mitchells Mill is probably the largest expanse of granitic flatrocks in North Carolina. Over 10 flatrocks are present, covering perhaps 15-20 acres. The Little River bisects the outcrops, flowing over bare rock in some places. These flatrocks contain essentially all of the "endemic" flatrock flora found in the Wake-Franklin cluster of granitic outcrops. A small area of private land north of the State-owned land is included in this site to make the boundary contiguous with the Barham Granitic Flatrocks.

As at all granitic flatrocks, the earliest plant pioneers on the bare rock are mosses and lichens. Where some soil has accumulated, Appalachian sandwort (*Minuartia glabra*), fameflower (*Talinum teretifolium*), and other vascular plants appear. Small's portulaca (*Portulaca smallii*), a State Threatened plant, is common at the natural area in sand and gravel at the edges of the rock. Shallow pools contain Piedmont quillwort (*Isoetes piedmontana*), a State Threatened species, and damp gravelly places on the rocks contain bright red patches of elf orpine (*Diamorpha smallii*) in the spring. Another rare plant present in this natural area is the granite flatsedge (*Cyperus granitophilus*). Flatrock pimpernel (*Lindernia monticola*) grows in damp places near the rocks, as well. A rare moss -- Oersted's campylopus (*Campylopus oerstedianus*), a Significantly Rare species -- grows on the flatrocks here, but it is not known anywhere else outside of Jamaica and Costa Rica.